

Risk Com U Wins Communication Awards

In September, Jennifer Keller, Risk Com U program director was recognized by the Kansas Public Health Association as winner of this year's Materials Contest, and also by the Public Relations Association of America - Kansas Chapter with a CLARUS award for the high quality of the "Risk Communication: A Team Approach" - Statewide Media Training event and campaign materials.

Risk Com U began in February 2004 as an idea and ran through December. After 15 sessions were held throughout Kansas, more than 400 first-responders had been trained how to better communicate with the media thanks to this statewide media training offered by the Kansas Association of Local Health Departments (KALHD) and KDHE, through a grant from the Kansas Health Foundation.



Each Risk Com U session featured training on working with the media on an every day basis and concentrated on how the skills should be applied during a crisis. Pat MacDonald, using her many years of experience as the spokesperson for the Sedgwick County Health Department, taught communications skills to the participants using both practical and entertaining exercises. Team building was also stressed during the sessions to encourage various agencies to get comfortable with working with each other during a crisis.

Mike Cameron and Mike Heideman, KDHE's risk communications team, took the participants through several mock crisis scenarios in "Dole County, Kansas." A videotaped news conference allowed everyone to practice the skills they had learned. Participants then had the chance to watch the videotape and critique each other's ability to handle tough questions from the media. Real members of local media participated in the news conference at several locations.